DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

SUCCESSIVE ACCELERATION OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IONS APPLIED TO SPACE PROPULSION

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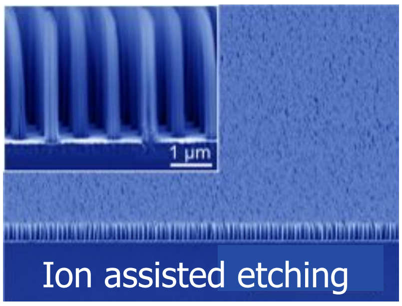
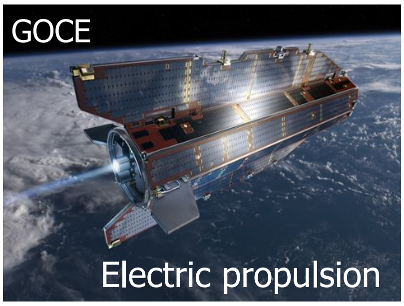
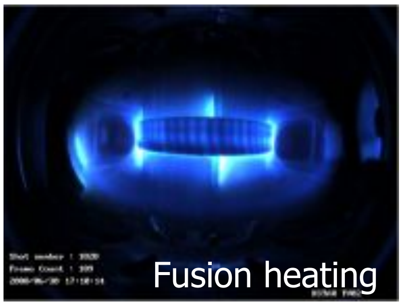
Electrons – Pros & Cons

Electrons required for plasma **generation** and beam **neutralization**

Electrons cause problems by surface and differential **charging** and slow ion-electron **recombination**







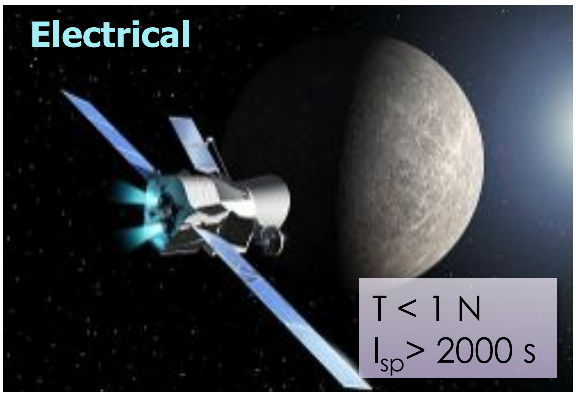
Space propulsion

acceleration by ejecting mass

$$m\frac{dv}{dt} = -\frac{dm}{dt}v_g$$

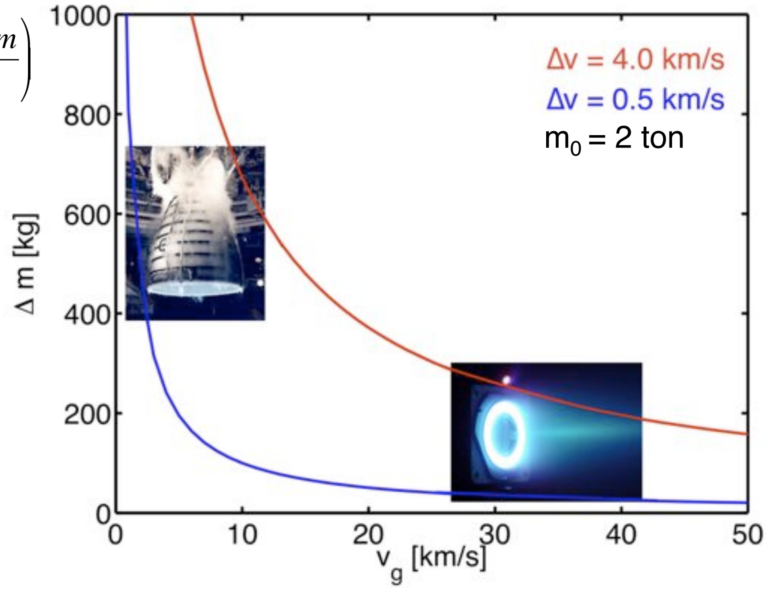
Trust $T = \frac{dm}{dt}v_g$

Specific Impulse $I_{sp} = \frac{v_g}{g_0}$

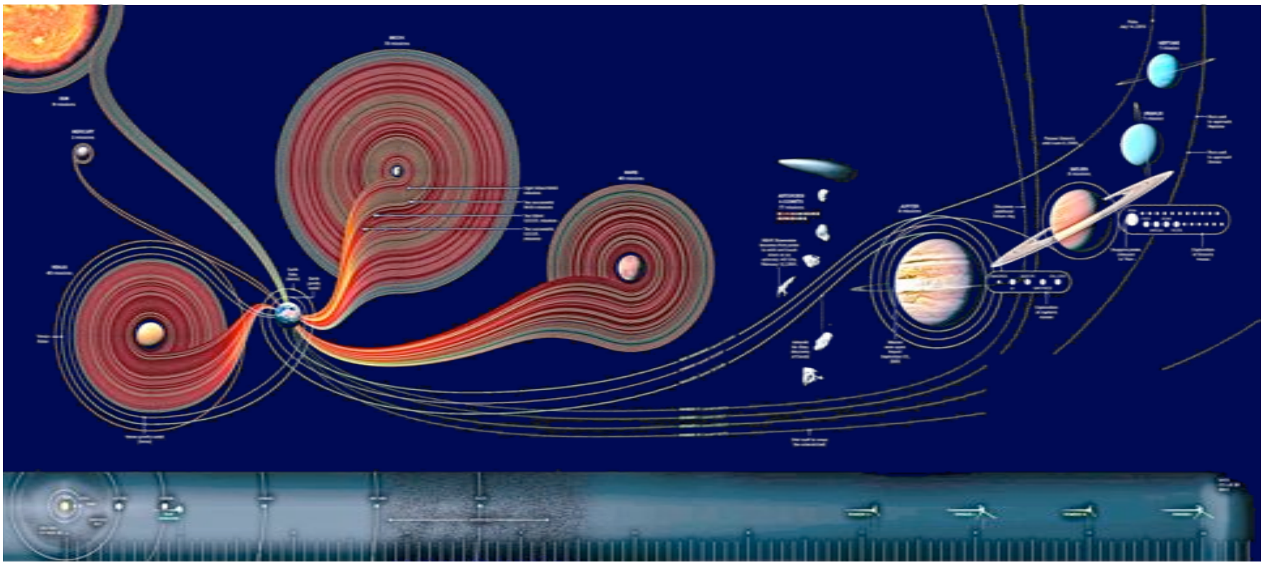


Mass consumption
Chemical versus Electric Propulsion

$$\Delta v = v_g \ln\left(\frac{m_0 - \Delta m}{m_0}\right)$$



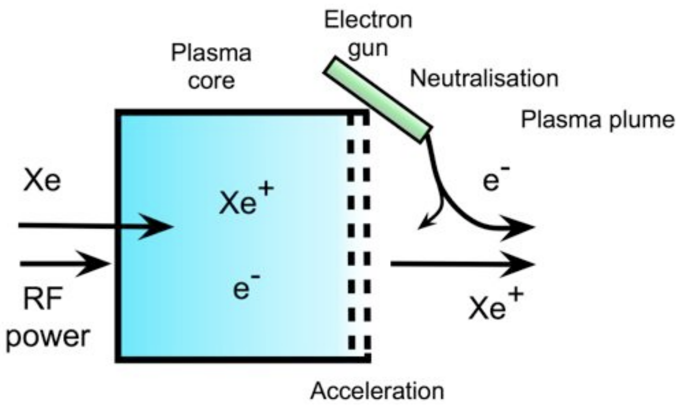
Cost to sent 1 kg to LEO is ~ 20 k€ !



Source: the big picture

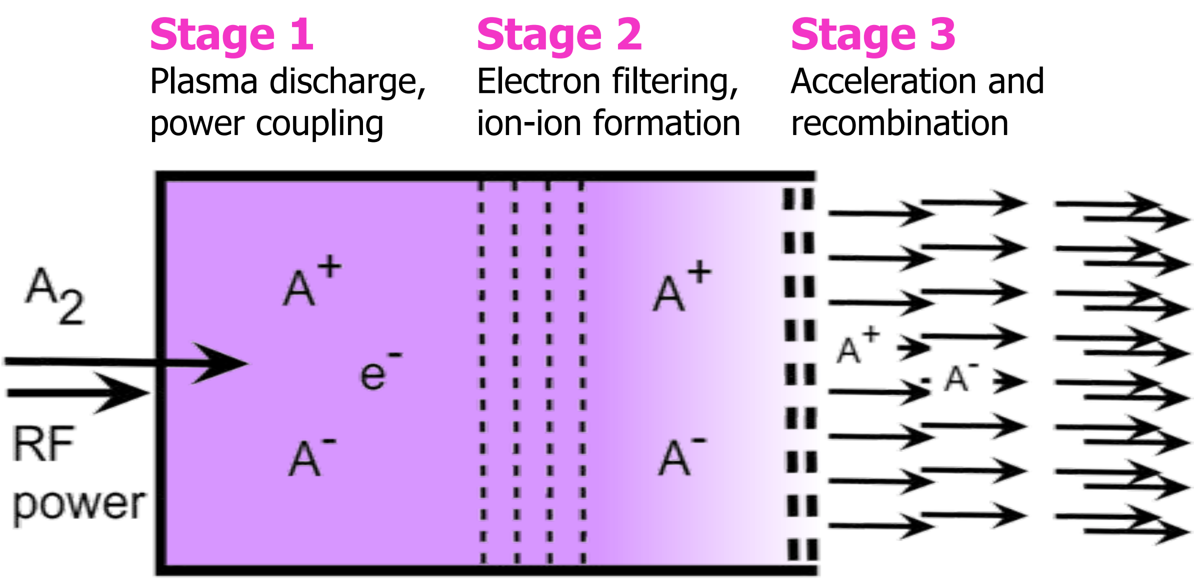
SPACE MISSIONS SINCE THE 1950'S

Principle of Electric Propulsion

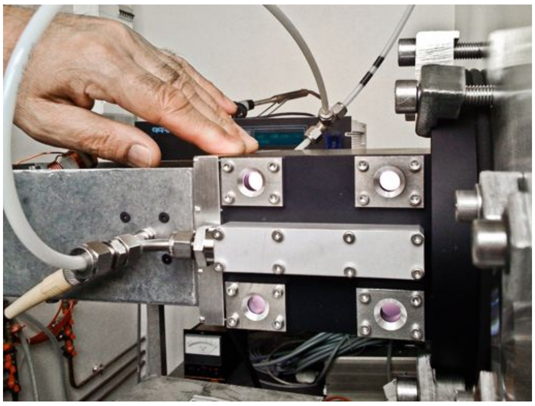


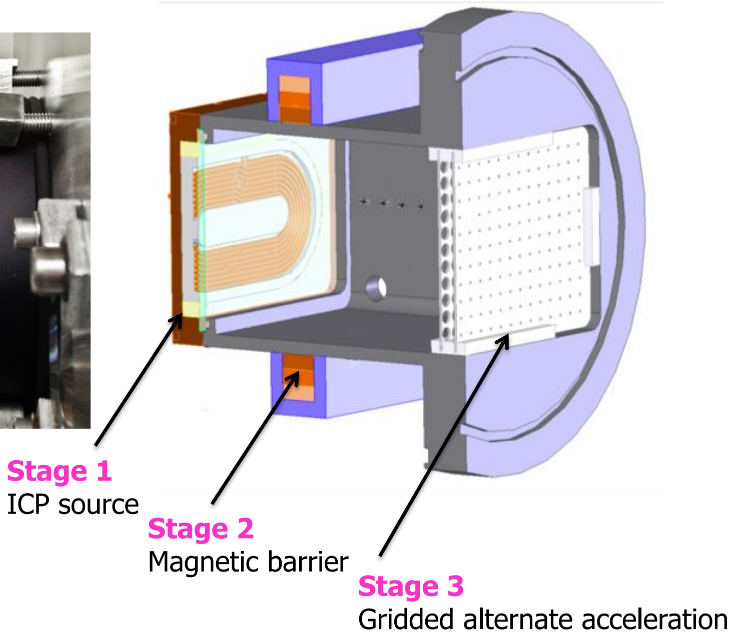
Two weak points:
1) Hollow cathode – limited lifetime and stability
2) Back scattering and sputtering

PEGASES
Plasma propulsion with electronegative gases



PEGASES Prototype





STAGE 1

PLASMA DISCHARGE WITH ELECTRONEGATIVE GASES

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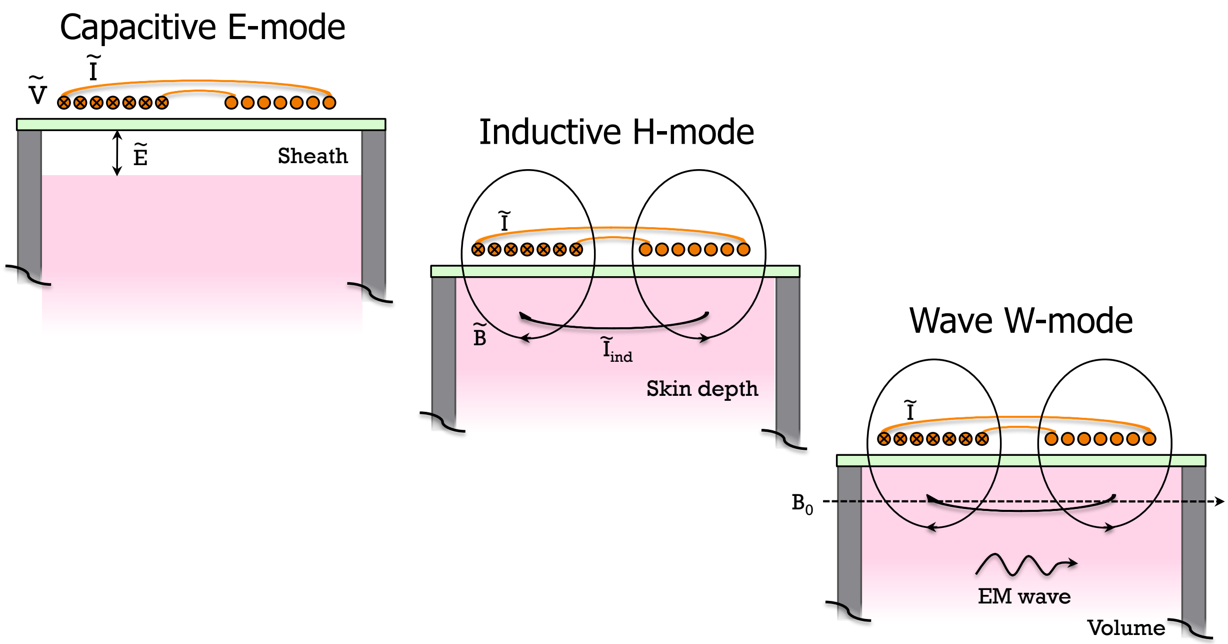
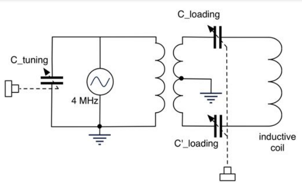
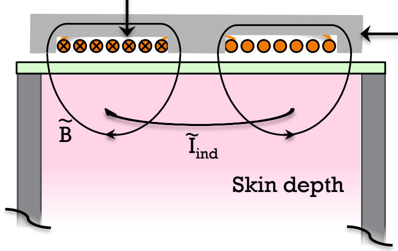
RF plasma discharges



Inductively coupled plasma (ICP)
with high efficiency

RF frequency: **4 MHz**
Z-matching: **Step-down transformer**



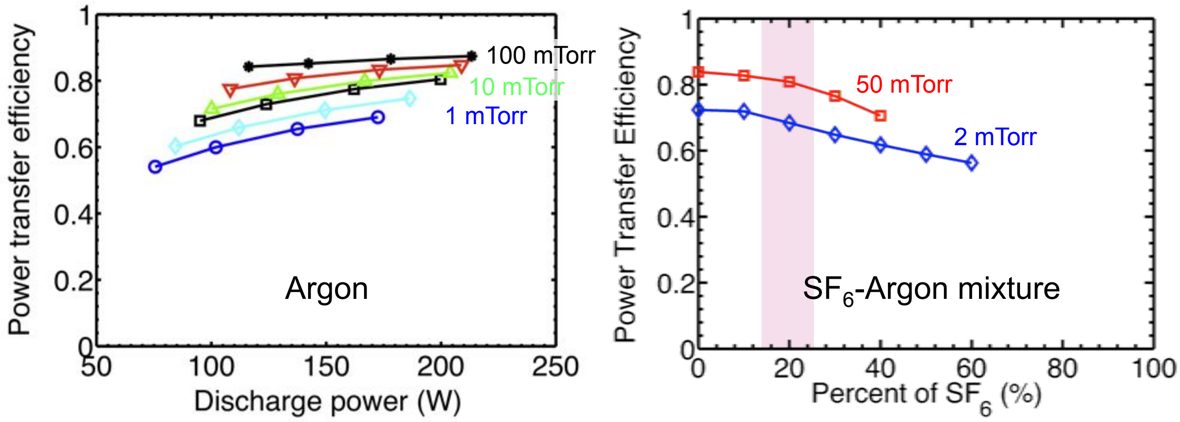


Inductor coil embedded in a **ferrite** material

Requirements for space applications:

Small and light
Minimal energy loss
Large parameter space in T and Isp

Power transfer efficiency in PEGASES



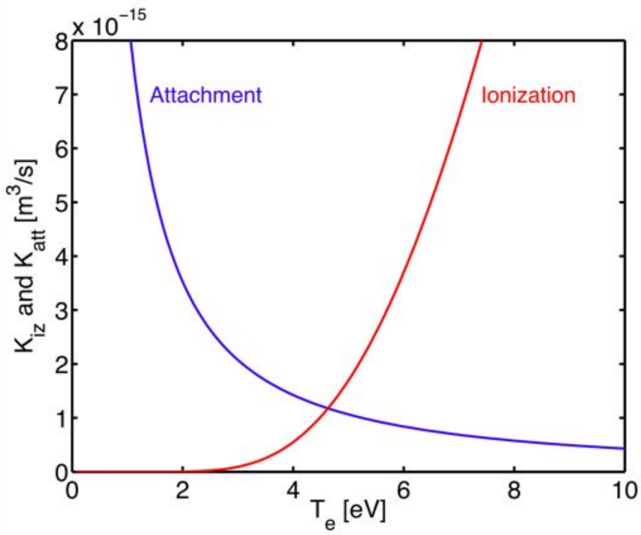
Up to 90 % power transfer efficiency in Argon

70 – 85 % efficiency in current PEGASES condition

Electronegative volume produced plasma

Ionization: $A_2+e^- \rightarrow \mathbf{A_2^+}+2e^-$

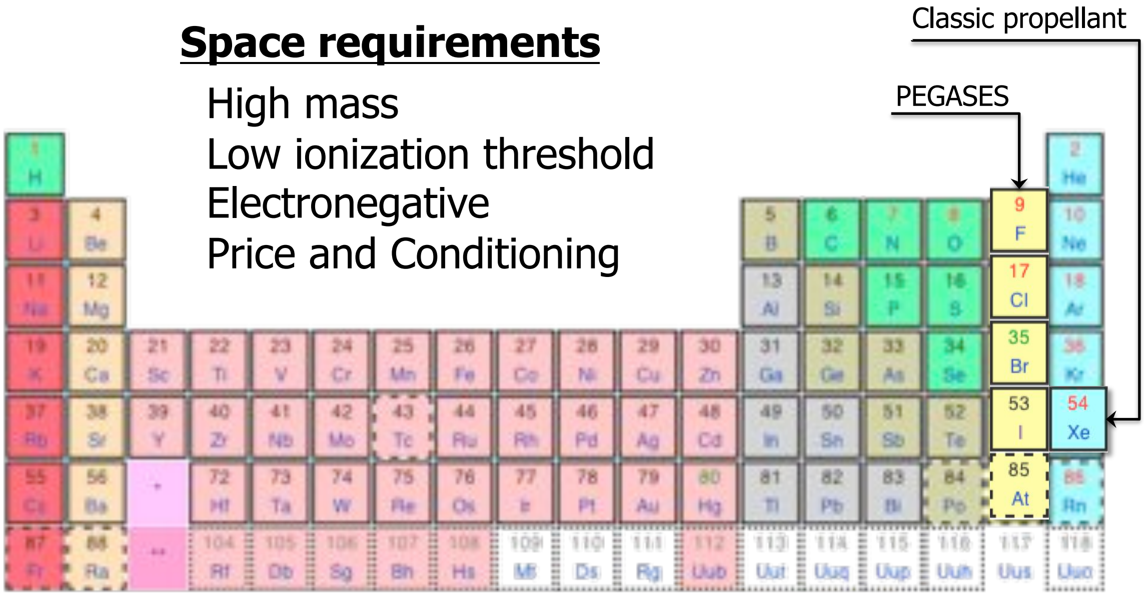
Attachment: $A_2+e^- \rightarrow \mathbf{A^-} + A$



Propellant in the PEGASES thruster

Space requirements

High mass
Low ionization threshold
Electronegative
Price and Conditioning



STAGE 2

MAGNETIC FILTER AND ION-ION FORMATION

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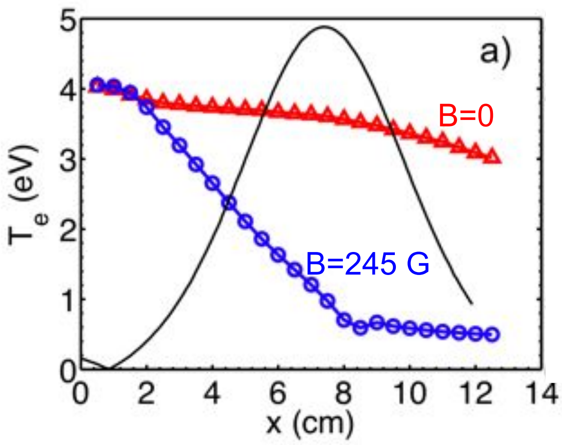
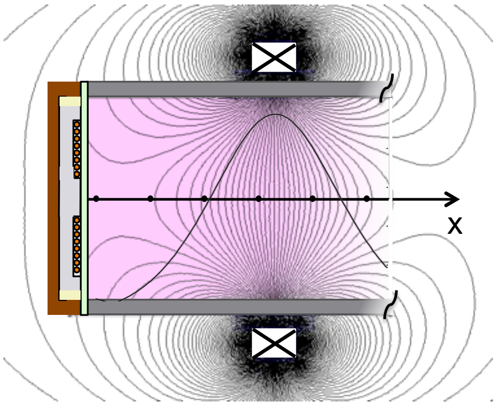
Control of the electron temperature

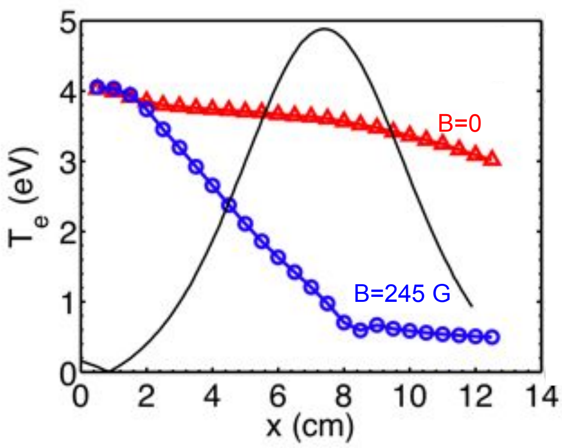


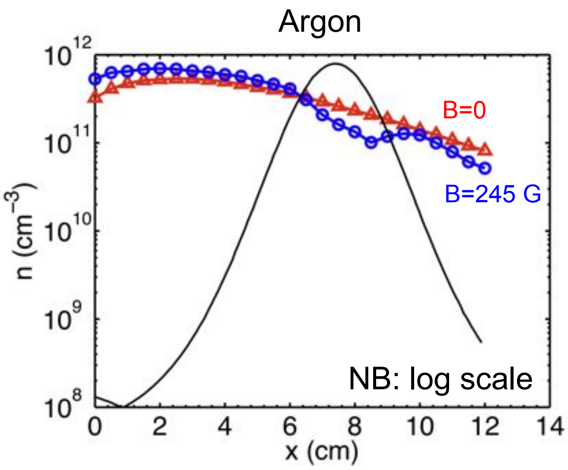


Cool down the electrons

Control of high and low T_e region by pressure and B-field

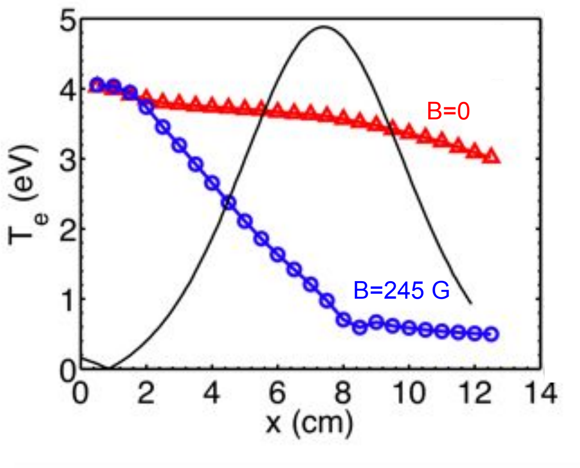
Plasma density in the magnetic barrier

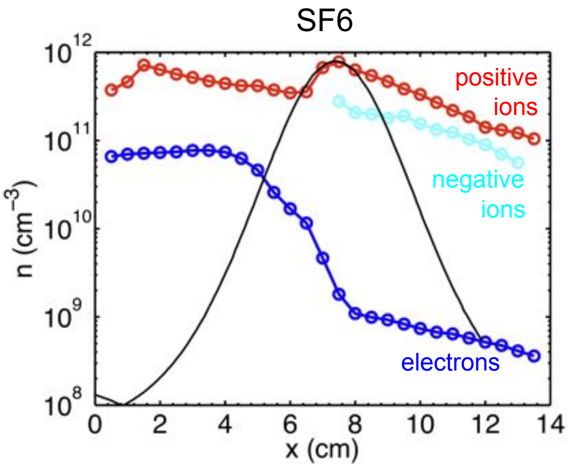




In **electropositive plasmas** the plasma density decreases strongly in the filter region

Ion-Ion plasma in the magnetic barrier

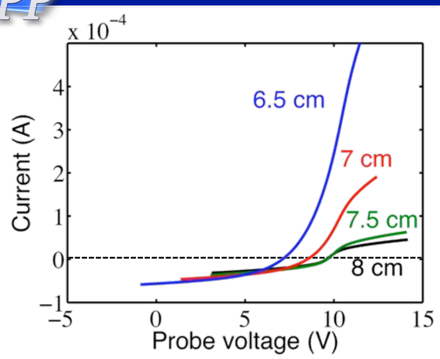


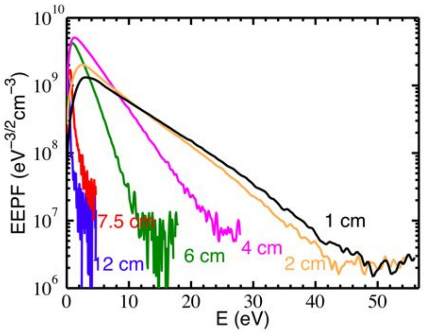


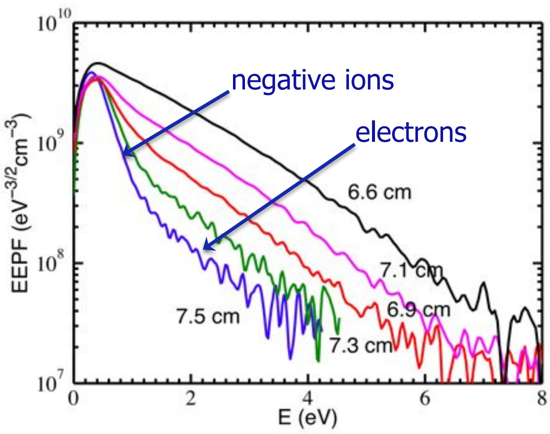
In **electronegative plasmas** the ion density remain high

$n_i \sim 5x10^{11}$ cm^{-3} at 150 W

Langmuir probes in electronegative plasmas







STAGE 3

ALTERNATE ION ACCELERATION

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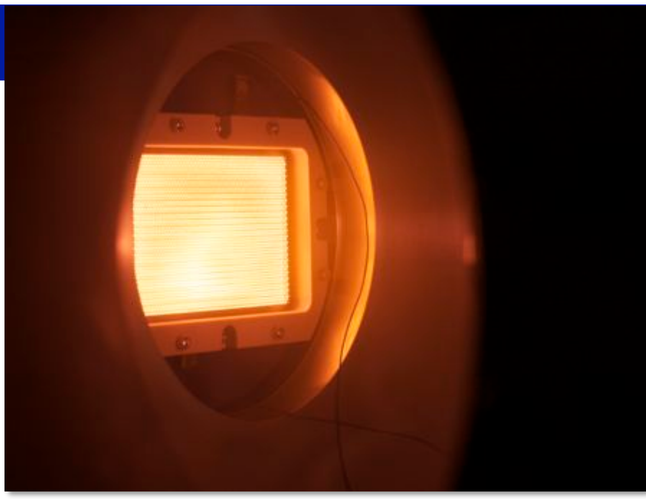
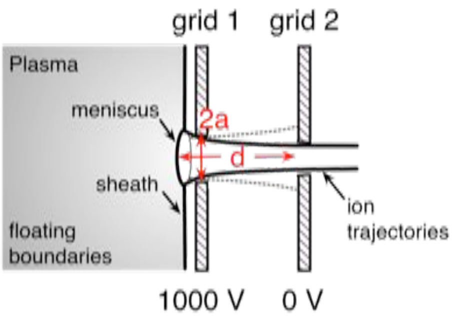
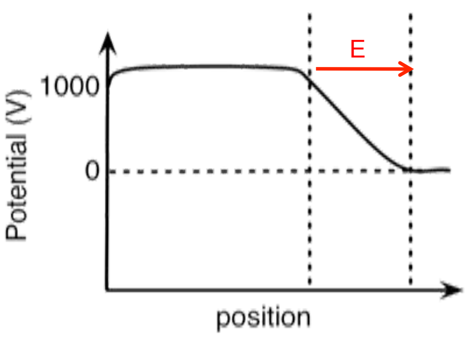


Classical gridded acceleration





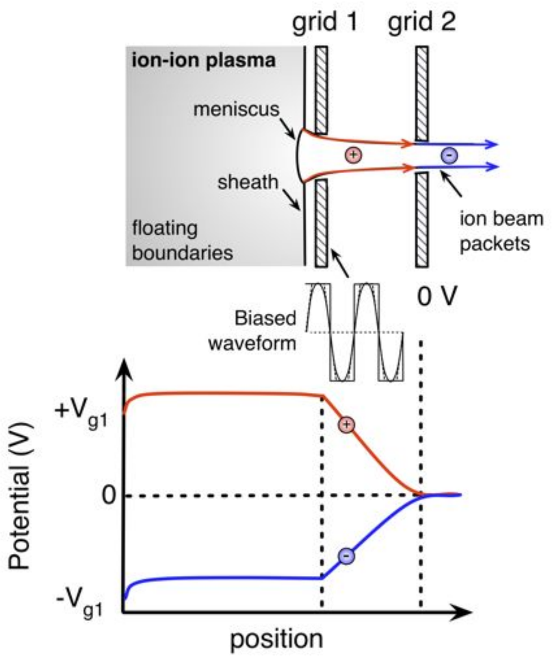
The Child-Langmuir space charge limited current controls the **maximum Thrust**

$$J_{CL} = \frac{4\varepsilon_0}{9}\left(\frac{2e}{M}\right)^{1/2}\frac{V^{3/2}}{d^2}$$

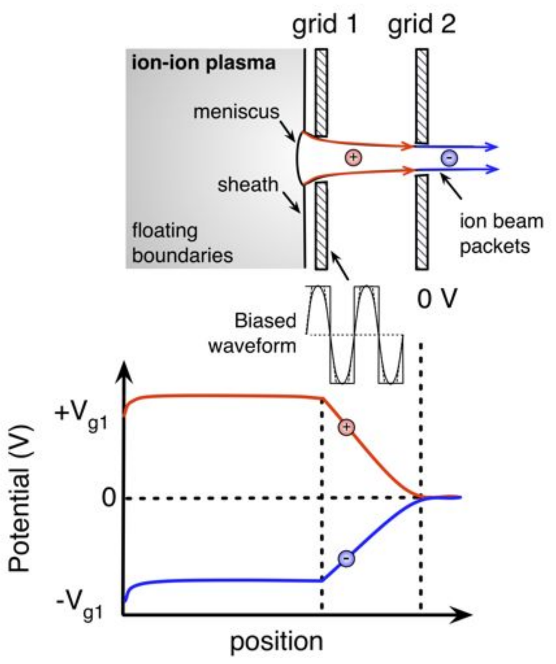
$$T \equiv v_i \frac{dm}{dt} = v_i \frac{I_b M_i}{e} = I_b\sqrt{\frac{2M_i V_b}{e}}$$

$$T_{\max} = \frac{8\varepsilon_0}{9}\frac{A_g T_g}{d^2}V_b^2$$

Alternate acceleration – Concept



Alternate acceleration – Requirements



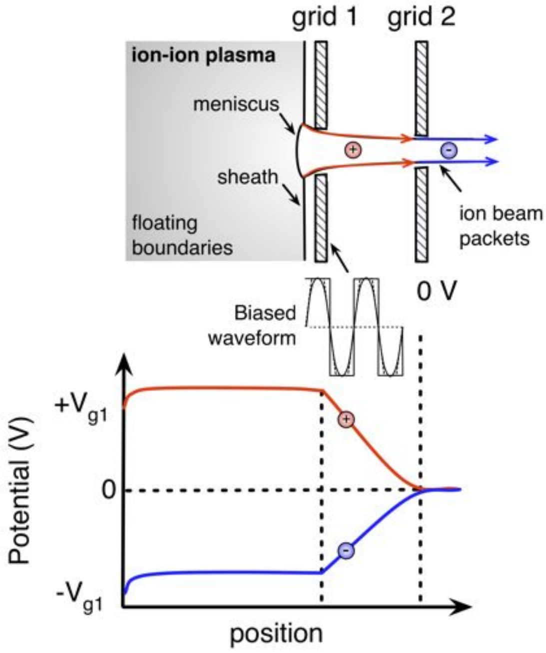
Waveform requirements

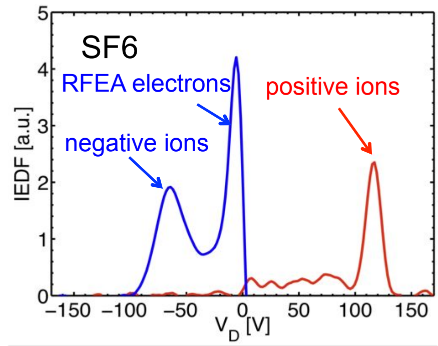
Upper limit:
$\omega < \omega_{pi} \sim$ 10-20 MHz
$\omega < 1/\tau_{tof} \sim$ 1 MHz

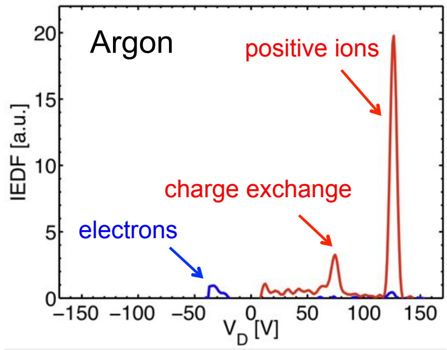
Lower limit:
Beam packet blowup
Beam oscillations
Estimated ω > kHz

Optimization:
square waveforms
variable rise time and periods

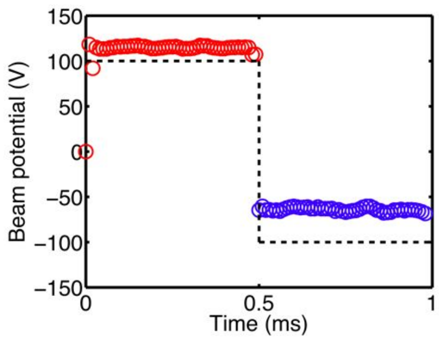
Alternate acceleration
Proof-of-Concept with ±100 V at 1 KHz

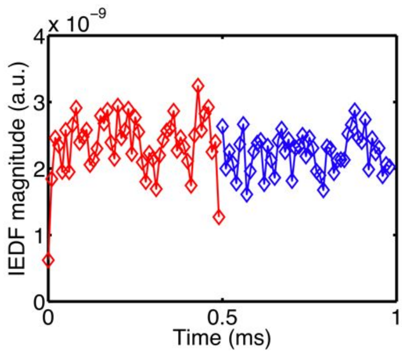


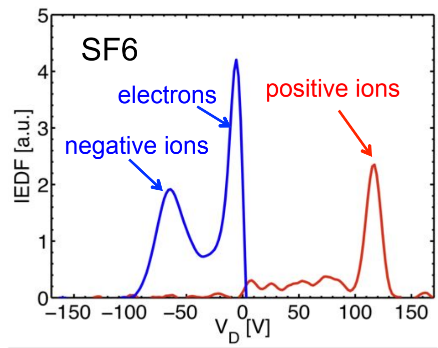




Alternate acceleration
Ion beam energy

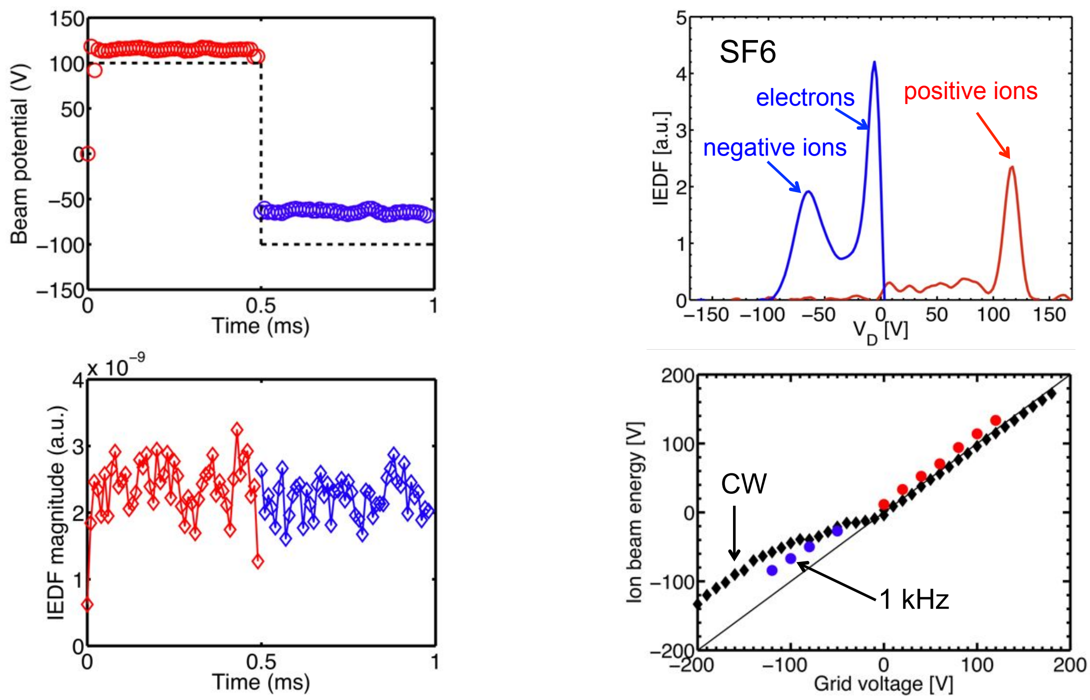




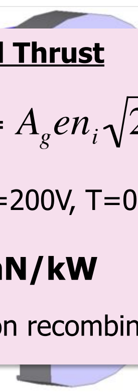


Positive ion beam at **+114 V**,
Negative ion beam at **– 67 V**

Alternate acceleration
Ion beam energy versus grid potential



PEGASES – from concept towards reality



Estimated Thrust

$$T = A_g \Gamma_i M_i v_b = A_g e n_i \sqrt{2 T_i V_b}$$

$n_i \sim 2\times10^{17}\ m^{-3}$, V_b=200V, T=0.5 eV

T= 20 mN/kW

with efficient ion-ion recombination

Stage 1

- Ferrite enhanced ICP source
- **70-85 %** power efficiency in current PEGASES conditions

Stage 2

- Segregation of the electronegative plasma
- Formation of ion-ion plasma
- High density **5×10^{11} cm^{-3}** at only 150 W

Stage 3

- Dual ion acceleration
- First **proof-of-concept**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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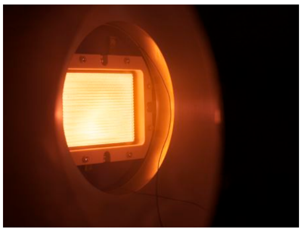
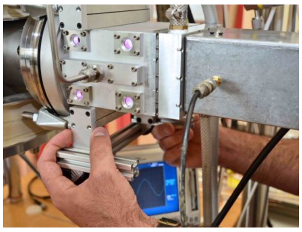
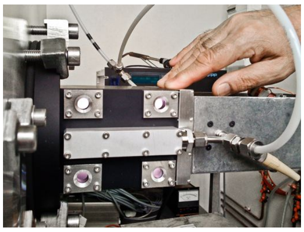


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